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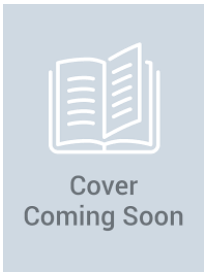

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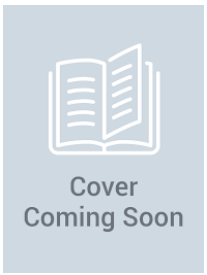

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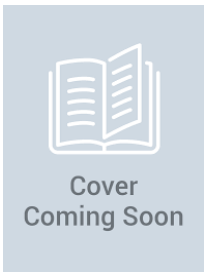

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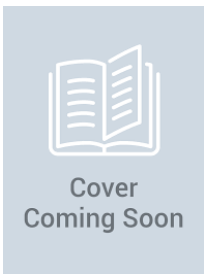

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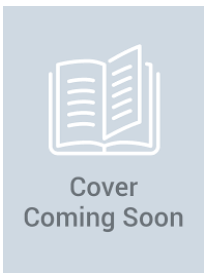

JAVIER GALLEGO

La caída del imperio

RANDOM HOUSE

JAVIER GALLEGO

La caída del imperio

RANDOM HOUSE

A Ana, por el imperio
A Belén, por el impulso
A Silvia, por la mano izquierda
A Idoia, por no dejarme caer

Y todo eso nos parece rosado y romántico
a nosotros que entonces éramos jóvenes.

FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD,
El Crack-Up

I. EL IMPERIO ROMANO

Viernes, 13 – Sábado, 14 de mayo de 2011

> Cuanto más sintonizados estaban con la época, más bebían.
>
> FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD,
> *El Crack-Up*

1

Caminamos como gatos sigilosos, entre el bullicio y el baile, unidos en la oscuridad por una cuerda invisible que nos atraviesa del primero al último. El último soy yo. Darío. Desvarío, para los amigos. Mis nuevos amigos. Porque dicen que desbarro. Porque voy hasta arriba. De esto y de lo otro. Primera vez. Les hace reír. A mí también. No me dan mucha bola pero me dejan estar. Acompañarles. Acoplarme. Son cinco. Amalia y cuatro más. Sus amigos. Sus viejos amigos. Salva, Jaco, Caín. No se llama Caín, se llama Abel. Entiendes. Entiendo. Y una chica a la que le dicen Leo. Leona. La Lía. La Leo. Yo voy detrás. Me coge de la mano. La suya es suave. Me dice Ven. Voy. Llegamos al centro de la sala Sol donde forman un círculo en el que se desatan arrebatados por la música, los brAAAAAzos en alto, el cu e e eello dislocado, temmmmblando de arriba abajo. Árboles en una tormenta. Hippies en Woodstock. Son hermosos. Me parecen hermosos. Tengo ganas de besar. Es la droga, el éxtasis, me dice Jaco que me ve. Me sabe ver. Está siempre pendiente. Es un perro pastor. Me devuelve al rebaño cuando me descarrío. Cuando me desvarío. Soy la oveja extraviada. Soy un niño de Hamelin. Soy una rata borracha. Sigo su flauta de cueva en cueva desde las. Once. O las. Doce. OlasOlasOlasOlasssssssssssssssssssssss. No sé. Ahora deben de ser. Deben de. Las tres o las cuatro. No sé. La noche es como este chicle en mi boca. Se estira en la lengua. Se extiende. Se encoge. Se

hincha. Estalla. Se rompe. Se mastica. Se muerde. Nunca se le acaba el sabor. El chicle me lo dieron ellos. Mis nuevos amigos. Te vendrá bien, me dijeron, porque me veían mal. Paraquemastiquesparaquesalivesparaelazúcar. No me dan mucha bola, pero se preocupan. Son majos. Me los encontré en la Wurlitzer, la Wurli, el Wurli, le dicen. Me los fui a encontrar. Iba buscando a Amalia. Un día dijo Es mi madriguera de conejo. Dentro, la Merienda de Locos en versión para adultos. Amalia en el País de las Pastillas. El Otro Lado del Otro Lado del Espejo. Animales nocturnos, especies exóticas, ejemplares raros, aseos cutres pintarrajeados y bafles chirriantes escupiendo punk rock. Diversión y desfase. Confusión y caos. Estaba hasta los topes. Tres bárbaros greñudos se agitaban en el escenario como anguilas eléctricas dando calambrazos. El sonido era sucio, pegajoso. Se te agarraba a la piel y se te metía debajo. Quiénes son. CÁPSULA, me dijo uno de los colegas que venían conmigo. Llegamos al final del bolo. Último tema. Ni nos cobraron. Nos quedamos al fondo, junto al *pinball*, donde un pavo jugaba una partida de espaldas al concierto, pasando del barullo, de los altavoces que echaban fuego, del público que jaleaba y movía las cabezas al unísono como si todos fueran uno mientras la bajista repetía en trance el estribillo *LET'S RUUN AWAAAYYYYY*, el batería ametrallaba la caja *LET'S RUUUN AWAAAYYYYY*, el guitarrista acuchillaba las cuerdas como Norman Bates a Janet Leigh en la escena del baño *LET'S RUUUN AWAAAYYY* y a mí se me clavaban las puñaladas en el tímpano y se me revolvía el estómago porque el volumen seguía subiendo y subiendo y la peña aullaba como una manada de lobos y yo también empecé a AULLAR COMO UNO de ellos, CON UNGRITO DE PAVOR DESAFINADO Y BESTIAL COMO EL BERRIDO DE

UN CIERVO, QUE ME SALÍA DE LAS TRIPAS Y SE FUNDÍA CON LA CANCIÓN COMO SI YO FUERA UN INSTRUMENTO Y MI CUERPO HUBIERA SIDO POSEÍDO

POR EL RUIDO.

Acabaron el concierto entre acoples y espasmos. Yo recuperé el aliento y mis colegas se recuperaron del susto. Fui al lavabo. Agua bendita después del rito satánico. Cuando volví, la jauría se había esfumado. Tendría que haber hecho lo mismo. Salvarme cuando aún podía, cuando aún estaba a tiempo. Pero no es fácil apartar la vista del fuego o del accidente. Menos aún, si el accidente es el tuyo. Tampoco es fácil dejar de mirar al meteorito que incendia el cielo o al monstruo que viene hacia ti arrasándolo todo. No puedes evitarlo. No puedes dejar de mirar. La noche es un espectáculo irresistible. Como un sacrificio humano.

Yo me lancé al mío con devoción de penitente. Pégame, pégame. Amalia estaba en la barra sobre un taburete. Toda de negro. Camiseta de Johnny Cash ceñida, vaqueros ajustados, botas Converse. De cuero. Pégame, pégame. El pelo rojo recogido en una coleta, más rojo por las luces del antro. El flequillo en diagonal sobre el ojo izquierdo: parece que se ocultase para espiarnos. Con el otro me miró como quien encuentra una mosca en el plato. Con recelo, con asco.

Qué haces tú aquí

Me trajeron, mentí.

No sabía que te gustara esta música

Me gustan las sorpresas

Yo he tenido suficientes por hoy

La primera en la frente. Eso iba por mí y por el curro. Porque hoy la han despedido y no tendría ganas de verme. De ver un ligue de una noche que le recuerde al periódico al que odia. Se volvió hacia sus colegas, los míos se retiraron. Era el plan. Entregar el paquete y darse el piro. Os vais. Nos vamos. Tenemos prisa. Perdemos el búho. Yo acababa de pedirme una birra. La última, dije levantando la botella hacia Amalia. Ella respondió con un golpe de cabeza. Dijo: Vale. O sea: Vete. La segunda también en la frente. Me salvó su amigo. La penúltima, me dijo echándome el brazo al hombro. Y después al oído: No le hagas ni puto caso, no ha tenido su mejor día ni su mejor año. Por cierto, soy Jaco, un poco heroína y un poco caballo. Se rio con más dientes de los que caben en la boca. Bien, pensé. No puede ser mala gente si se ríe de sí mismo. Tenía un protector, un aliado. El enlace para infiltrarme en el grupo. Me acogió bajo su ala y me pegué a él para poder revolotear cerca de Amalia, picotear sus migajas, atrapar alguna mirada al vuelo. Pero nada. Me ignoraba a caso hecho. Hubiera preferido la humillación. Pégame, pégame. Me quedé porque Jaco insistió. Dale una hora. Deja que la droga haga su efecto. A ti también te vendría de perlas. El qué. Vente conmigo. Adónde. A refrescarnos. Me invitó a golosinas. Cocaína, primero. Periquito para volar. Luego, petazetas mágicos: unos cristalitos rosados que chupan metiendo la puntita del dedo humedecido en el pollo.

Qué es, pregunté cuando le vi sacarlo.

M

Cómo

MDMA. El éxtasis de Krypton. Lo que toma Clark Kent en el desayuno

Qué hace

Te abre la mente y los sentidos. Es como si te enchufaran directamente el cerebro a un videojuego. Imagínate follar. La puta polla. Realidad aumentada y mejorada. La música suena en 3D, tus colegas son más colegas y todo el mundo es más guapo. La llaman la droga del amor porque hasta un roto como yo encuentra su descosido. Yo la llamo la pócima de los galos porque con ella aguantas más que un romano. Míralos a ellos, todos han tomado, dijo señalando a sus amigos. Parecían un mural. Héroes de un fresco. Expresión exaltada, pieles radiantes, pupilas ardiendo. Quiero probarlo, le dije y me dio una chupadita y un trago. Enseguida entendí por qué. Sabía a rayos. Agrio de cojones. Un amargor químico tan intenso que apreté las muelas hasta casi saltarme los empastes. Bebe, bebe, decía él, que todo se pasa bebiendo.

Jaco, me lo estás endrogando

Poco, Amalia, poco

Cuánto

Dos y dos, cuatro

No te pases que el chico es primerizo

Mujer, para que afine al mismo tono al que estamos tocando nosotros

Tú lo que quieres es que se me abalance

Tú lo que quieres es que me coma el tigre, que me coma el tigre, que me coma el tigre

Salva, no te metas

Bonita, yo me meto todo lo que me quepa en el cuerpo. Treinta años para salir del armario, no vas tú ahora a ponerle puertas

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Pues para ti la perra chica

Es perrito faldero. Muy mono, por cierto. Menudos ojazos tiene. Si no lo quieres tú, no estorbes y échate a un lado

Anda, calla y dame

Tú también, Bruta

Una chupadita solo

Guarra

Y tú, Jaco, bájale el ritmo que la mandíbula se le está columpiando

Deja que se relaje, que parece un conejillo asustado por las luces de un coche

Y yo soy la que va conduciendo

Eso es

Del Wurli fuimos al José Alfredo, bar de modernos con aspecto de coctelería de viejos donde se chuzan las jóvenes promesas del nuevo periodismo. Un corral con mucho gallito, dijo Amalia que iba con desgana porque no quería toparse con compañeros. Yo tampoco. Me había pegado fuerte y empezaba a desvariar de lo lindo. Darío Desvarío. Mi mente iba muy rápido, mi lengua muy despacio, la realidad al doble de velocidad que mis ojos. Perdía fotogramas. Algunos quedaban detenidos y se solapaban con los siguientes. Veía borroso. Y. A. Saltos. Escenas con. Cortes. Fogonazos. Parpadeaba para intentar fijar las imágenes sin éxito. Mis amigos se movían como a.u.t.ó.m.a.t.a.s.d.e.u.n.m.e.c.a.n.o.p.s.i.c.o.d.é.l.i.c.o. Se lo expliqué a Jaco y Jaco dijo Nosotros lo llamamos el cine mudo, y todos empezaron a actuar como Buster Keaton y a mover los labios sin emitir sonido con gestos histriónicos. Era. Di. Ver. Ti. Do.

Acabaron simulando la típica pelea cómica de El Gordo y el Flaco y tirados por el suelo partiéndose el culo. Yo me reía pero a destiempo. Como si el chiste tardara en llegar al cerebro y el cerebro tardara en comprenderlo y mandar la orden al cuerpo. Darío Desvarío.

Tuvimos suerte, no entramos. El sitio estaba a reventar y prefirieron quedarse fuera fumando. Jaco preparó unas rayas apoyándose en el capó de un coche sin importarle que la comisaría de la plaza de Luna estuviera a unos metros.

Y la poli, le pregunté nervioso.

Si vienen, compartimos, respondió sin inmutarse, separando la cocaína con el canto de la tarjeta y pasándoselo por la lengua cuando terminó de hacerlo. Para cortar la bajona del M, dijo ofreciéndome el turulo. Una de cal y otra de arena. Yo casi derramo la cal por el suelo porque a mi cabeza le costaba decirle a mi nariz que tenía que inspirar en lugar de bufar como un toro. Sorber y soplar no se puede al mismo tiempo, se descojonaba Jaco. Cada vez que se ríe, pienso en caballos. Caballos relinchando.

Pero tú y él
Yo y él qué
Que si
Que si qué, Salvatore
Que si te lo tiraste, chocho, que hay que decírtelo todo
Pero si es un niño, maricón
Maricón no es, ya te lo digo yo, que de eso sé un rato
Y qué problema hay con la edad
Ninguno, Leo, pero para mí es muy crío

A la leona le gustan los cachorritos, verdad que sí

Cuanto más joven, más tiernito y más gusto pervertirlo

Así te renuevas la sangre como el Keith Richards

No me queda gota, Caín: el Cuervo era un vampiro

Yo solo digo, nena, que después de tanto funeral, no te vendría mal un homenaje

Y yo ya te he dicho que no tengo el coño para farolillos

Un clavo saca a otro clavo

Y menos aún para el bricolaje, Leo

Pues si un clavo no saca otro clavo, un rabo sí saca otro rabo

Salva

Qué

Cerdo

Siempre

Si a ti te funciona

A las mil maravillas

A mí no

Porque no quieres

Exactamente por eso. Porque no quiero

Nos metimos las rayas, se fumaron un porro, compramos unas latas y seguimos camino. Como sherpas en una expedición. Lo teníamos todo. Cruzamos Gran Vía hasta Santo Domingo. Bajamos hacia Arenal. Paramos en un garito cerca de las Descalzas. El nombre en letras de molde plateadas sobre una marquesina: TEMPLO DEL GATO. De templo poco más que la fachada. Iglesia estilo Las Vegas, portada celeste con dos ventanas, una de arco apuntado y otra de medio punto con vidriera. En la vidriera, un gato rojo en un

sagrado corazón. Detrás, un cartel luminoso azul eléctrico, BEER ON TAP, OPEN, y una fecha, 1985. Año de inauguración. Me quedé colgado mirándolo todo. Darío Desvarío. Ya has vuelto a darle al *pause*, me dijo Jaco pulsando el *play* de nuevo. Entramos. Pasamos junto a una barra con un teléfono de monedas y cuatro taburetes. En uno de estos estaba sentado Kike Turmix cuando le dimos nuestra maqueta, me cuenta Caín. Era un punkrocker legendario que nos consiguió nuestro primer bolo. Al final de un tramo de escaleras, el umbral de entrada al santuario, un portal de madera con adornos frutales coronado por otro gato, un gato de neón. Encima, la leyenda A CALIFORNIA MUSIC BAR. Al cruzarlo, se santiguaron. Todos dijeron miau y Leo hizo rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr, un ronroneo felino, mientras se rozaba el lomo contra mi brazo. Subimos otro tramo de escaleras a la izquierda y entramos en la sala que imita un callejón oscuro de peli de pandilleros: muros de ladrillo, bidones de gasolina, lámparas industriales, tubos de ventilación de acero… Por las paredes, más gatos, gatos pintados. De las columnas colgaban teles antiguas emitiendo sin sonido vídeos musicales. No faltaban el *pinball* y el billar, elementos imprescindibles en todo antro que se precie de serlo. A un lado, había un escenario cerrado por una malla metálica donde me dicen que hace años tenían una pitón. Al otro, una vieja taquilla de cine que hace las veces de cabina de dj. Sonaban canciones llenas de aullidos salvajes, baterías desquiciadas y guitarrazos furiosos. Es garaje, chaval, me instruía Jacobo. A mí me parecía que tocaban todos colocados. Yo también iba fino. Pedí un tercio y me apoyé en la barra para intentar parar el balanceo del barco. Al rato, vino Amalia. No a por mí sino a por una cerveza. Pero por fin me echó cuentas. Me miró y me sonrió.

Cómo lo llevas, me preguntó, cómo lo estás pasando.

Muy bien, muy bien… Tus colegas son… O sea, estoy un poco, ya sabes… Jaja… Jaco me ha… Perdona, es que creo que…

Mi cabeza era un astronauta saltando ingrávido de una palabra a otra, hundiéndose en los silencios como en cráteres lunares y volviendo a saltar en busca del final de una frase.

Gracias por acogerme, conseguí balbucir.

Amalia se giró hacia el camarero y no contestó. No había sido idea suya, tampoco me iba a mentir. Quedó claro que no tenía nada que hacer con ella. La grieta se abrió de nuevo entre nosotros. Me vi caer al abismo. Pero alargué la mano a tiempo para tocar su hombro y volver a acercarnos.

Cómo estás tú, pregunté.

Jodida pero contenta, ahora podré volar a mi aire sin nadie que me corte las alas

Ya imagino

No lo creo

Volvimos a quedarnos callados. Le di un sorbo a la botella para tener la boca ocupada. Estaba vacía. Amalia se dio cuenta. Pégame, pégame. Me lo tengo merecido.

Quieres otra

Venga, vale

Se echó hacia delante para pedir y aproveché que no me miraba para decirle que sentía su despido, que le hubiera tocado la bala en la ruleta rusa. Amalia se volvió hacia mí con un gesto de ternura, de compasión, como si el despedido no fuera ella sino yo.

No es una ruleta, Darío. No es una tómbola ni un sorteo. Es una purga. Eliminan a los que nos hemos significado, los del comité de

huelga, el manifiesto y la carta a la dirección. Se quitan dos problemas de encima, las pancartas y los sueldos. El sindicato y el trabajador

Se giró de nuevo hacia la barra y pidió los dos tercios. No me dejó pagar el mío.

Aún no soy pobre, bromeó. Ya me invitarás tú cuando lo sea.

Me sentí culpable por haberme librado, por haber salvado el cuello. La culpa de los supervivientes. El síndrome del impostor. Pero no iba yo a lamentarme delante de ella como esa gente que llora más que la familia en los entierros. Tampoco era cuestión de decirle que soy el último mono, que tengo un sueldo de mierda y un contrato de becario, que el máster me lo pagué currando como una mula y gastándome los ahorros, que ay pena penita pena, ay pobrecito de mí.

Se quedan con los precarios porque no tienen ni voz ni voto, añadió leyéndome la mente y esa verdad aplastante zanjó la cuestión. Volvió la gravedad de golpe, caí a plomo y todas las tripas se me vinieron a la boca.

Voy al baño

Estaba mareado. Un hormigueo me recorría la cara y sentía que se me iban las fuerzas. Reprimí una arcada. La mezcla de los polvos blancos con los polvos pica pica estaban provocando una reacción en cadena. El inicio de una erupción volcánica. Pero aún más que vomitar, tenía ganas de meter la cabeza en el retrete y tirar de la cadena. Pégame, pégame. Me lo merezco. Darío, desvarías. Antes de que me fuera, Amalia chocó su cerveza contra la mía.

Pero gracias por preguntar

Era su primera palabra amable en toda la noche. También nuestra primera conversación desde que nos liamos en la cena de Navidad. Tampoco fue nada. Cuatro magreos. El alcohol ayudó al principio y precipitó el final. Enseguida se puso nostálgica. No puedo, lo siento, no puedo, repitió mirando a través de mí como si mirara dentro de ella. Me contó que acababa de dejarlo con su pareja, un tal Juan, con el que llevaba una década.

Diez años son muchos, dije.

Una vida, respondió en un susurro, como si echara el último aliento.

Dame un cigarro, uno industrial, que acabe antes conmigo

Amelie, qué melodramática te has vuelto

Qué quieres, Salvatore, si todo lo que me importa, me da de lado

Que pases página, porque cuanto antes la pases, antes cerramos el capítulo

Ese es el problema, que cada página que paso es peor

Me refería al libro de Juan, no a tu trabajo

El libro del Apocalipsis, de ese mismo hablaba yo

Jue jue, esa es buena

Gracias, Caín, al menos hay alguien a quien no le parezco un muermo

Hace seis meses, cariño

Que menos que un año para el duelo

Pero sigues en fase de negación

De desaparición. No he vuelto a tener noticia

Nada

Ni una palabra. Tú

Tampoco

Jaco

Apenas

Cómo apenas

Vamos, que… Un día hablamos. Pero… O sea. Por teléfono

Ya

Te lo juro

Podéis quedar con él lo que os dé la gana, no os lo impido

Ya

Y tú, Leo

Yo qué

Que si le has

Una vez

Y

Y qué

Que qué se cuenta

Poca cosa

Contigo también lo hizo

No hicimos nada

Cómo dices

Qué me has preguntado

Que si también desapareció cuando lo dejasteis

No lo sé, no me acuerdo. Hace mucho. Es posible, siempre ha sido escurridizo

A mí no me ha llamado, Amalia

Caín, a ti no te llamaba ni cuando estábamos juntos

Eso es cierto, pero mi hermano

Tu hermano, qué

Su hermano, nada, ya te he dicho, un día hablamos. Punto

Qué pasa, Jacobino, por qué te tensas

No me tenso. Será la farlopa, que me acelera

Pues no sé qué será ni lo que estáis ocultando pero estáis todos raros del carajo

No te rayes, Amy

Sois vosotros los que me estáis rayando la cabeza. Venga, vámonos

Hay que esperar a tu chaval

Dónde está

Dentro

Ahí viene, no trae buena cara

Dadle azúcar. Alguien tiene un chicle

Mira que te dije que no le cebaras, Jaco, que es novato

Jue jue quién lo diría

Le sentará bien el paseo

Anda, cuídamelo

Ya veo que hoy soy tu canguro

No haberle invitado

Lo hice por ti

Lo único que quiero que hagáis por mí es que dejéis de sentir lástima

Bulle El Sol. Buen nombre para un garito de noche. El único sol que brilla de madrugada, dice Amalia. Cuanto más tarde, más luce. Se llena cuando los bares se vacían. Mareas de gente suben y bajan por la escalera de caracol. Nosotros la hemos bajado como vedetes, como estrellas de cine, como la Swanson en *El crepúsculo de los*

dioses. Con mucha parafernalia, mucha afectación. No recuerdo cómo llegamos. Se me apagó la cámara al salir del Templo. Tengo lagunas: blancos. Ahora no son planos, son secuencias enteras. Darío Desvarío. He pasado del cine mudo al videoarte. Del experimental al videoclip. La cámara se ha vuelto a encender cuando nos deslizábamos escaleras abajo. En la sala, la marabunta dándolo todo a ritmo de disco, funk y soul. Misa negra. Amén, aleluya, digo, y Salva responde Gloria Gaynor y Gloria a Dios. Nuestra tribu baila en círculo la danza del fuego. Amalia se ha separado del grupo, se ha escabullido entre la gente como si se quisiera perder y no ha dejado de mecerse todo el tiempo, un rato que a mí se me hace muy largo y muy corto, un momento que no termina, un instante detenido en el tiempo, no hay otra manera de decirlo, me parece que llevo años mirándola pero que acabo de empezar a hacerlo, y no me importaría estar otros tantos años viendo cómo se mece, porque se mece, no baila, se mece como si escuchara una música más lenta que la que está sonando, una música que escuchara ella sola, que a lo mejor no es música, es tal vez un murmullo, el murmullo de su cabeza, de su cuerpo, que escucha con los ojos cerrados para que no se le escape, para que se le quede dentro, mientras se pierde entre la multitud y se aleja de mí igual que una hoja arrastrada por la corriente.

Carita de cordero degollao con esos ojitos tan tiernos, ojazos azules como el *Azul* de Rubén, y te llamas como él, Darío, me miras con los mismos ojos tristes y dulces, tristes y dulces, ojos trilces, con los que me mirabas esta tarde cuando dejé la redacción por última vez, con los que me buscabas como me buscas ahora, con miedo a

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Exploring the Variety of Random Documents with Different Content

Seven feet of snow lay piled along the sides of the streets of that city when I arrived, and chunks of ice floated down the Hudson, icicles hung from the sky-scrapers; everyone shivered out of doors, and baked, or rather stewed, inside the houses.

"Where is my fur coat?" I asked.

"It has not arrived," was the answer.

Distressed and surprised, I went off the next day to the Steamship Office to demand the coat. From White Star to Cunard, from Cunard to White Star, backwards and forwards I trudged. At last a package securely sewn up and sealed was found. Was that it?

Really I could not say, as I had never seen the parcel before; but, as my name was on it, I presumed it was. Would the clerk kindly look inside and see if it was a blue cloth coat with a fur lining and sable collar?

The clerk regretted, but he dared not open it, and suggested my filling in a sheet of paper.

"Certainly, I would fill in anything to get my coat."

So I began. They have a way in America of asking the most irrelevant questions. Your age?—Parents?—Probable length of sojourn?—What illnesses have you had?—If you are a cripple?—What languages you speak?—and generally end up by enquiring of first-class passengers if they have ever been in prison.

I answered reams of such-like questions, as far as I can remember; swore to all sorts of queer things, and against "Value" put forty or fifty pounds, which was what the coat had originally cost.

The clerk took the paper, read it slowly through, appeared to juggle with figures, and then said calmly:

"The duty will be twenty-three pounds!" ($115.)

"The what?" I exclaimed.

"The duty——"

"What duty? It is a very old coat; it has been in Iceland, Lapland, Russia, and other countries with me, and it is not for sale. It is my own coat."

"I quite understand all that," he replied, "but you said its value was forty or fifty pounds, and we charge sixty per cent on the

value."

I nearly had a fit. I was sailing next day; I had no twenty-three pounds in cash to pay with, and I absolutely declined to disburse anything.

He simply refused to disgorge. Deadlock.

Fuming and fretting, I left the office. Every influential friend I had was appealed to in the next few hours, I maintaining stoutly that every paper in America should hear of the injustice to my "old clo'," if I had to cross the Atlantic without it; and if I died from cold, my death would be laid at the door of the American custom-house officials.

Finally, the affair was arranged. At seven o'clock next morning a friend fetched me in that rare commodity—in New York—a cab, and we drove those weary miles to the docks. My luggage was on the vehicle, my ticket in my hand. It was not the same dock as I was sailing from at ten o'clock. More palaver, more signing of documents, more swearing to the identity of the coat, more showing of frayed edges, to prove the coveted garment was not new; and the precious thing was at last handed over. An official helped me into it. Another official mounted on the box of the cab and drove with me to the next dock; he actually conveyed me—and the coat—"in bond" to my ship. He saw me up the gangway, and then—but apparently not till then—did he believe I was not going to sell the coat, and cheat the United States of a sixty per cent duty.

Up to that time I had been somewhat large in my views, somewhat of a Free Trader; but after that I realised how impossible it was for England to stand out practically alone against all the other protected countries, and that if Free Trade was right, Free Trade must be universal or not at all. Why should we be the only people to be philanthropic?

When they wanted to take my fur coat from me I also realised I was not really a Socialist. I did not wish to share it with anyone; and when they wanted to charge me for my own wares, I felt the injustice of England allowing tens and tens of thousands of new foreign clothes to enter our ports unchallenged, while America and other countries charge half the value of the goods received.

From that moment I believed in Protection, and bade adieu to Free-Trade notions and Socialistic dreams.

We do the *giving*, while others do the *taking*, and the odds work against ourselves.

As we can't make the world Free Traders, let us enjoy Protection, like the rest of the world. Conscription, more practical—and especially technical—education, and the revival of apprenticeships, would do more good to England than all the Socialistic tearing to pieces of manners and customs, strikes, disorganisation, and all the rest of it.

Cabinet Ministers, with their five thousand a year, and Members of Parliament, with their four hundred pounds, can afford to go on keeping the pot of discontent boiling—its very seething is what keeps them in office. Paid agitators are ruining the land.

"From gay to grave" this chapter is headed. Surely no misnomer, for to pass from teacups on the Terrace of Lords' and Commons' Houses, where women chat and smile, and show off their pretty frocks, to the atmosphere of solid learning diffused by the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, its huge staff, its editor, its hundreds of workers, this is a weighty and serious enough ending.

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* celebrated its eleventh birthday—I mean edition—on the 13th December, 1910; and all the great papers (and the greater Dailies "include the lesser") took notice of the really noteworthy banquet.

Four dinners had been already given by Mr. Hugh Chisholm, the editor, to his masculine contributors, but the feminine element being less numerous, it was thought inadvisable to distribute the women as scanty plums in four large dough puddings. Therefore the fifth and last of the series of *Encyclopædia* dinners given at the Savoy Hotel was dedicated to celebrating the share taken by women in the colossal work. We sat down two hundred and fifty, and no more representative attendance of light and learning was ever brought together. It was a triumph for both sexes. A splendid gathering of men came to do those women workers honour.

The Times said:

> "Perhaps, if looked at rightly and seriously, one of the most remarkable events in the world of women for many years was the dinner given on Tuesday last by the Editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in celebration of the part taken by women in the preparation of the 11th edition of that monument of learning. Among the women present as contributors or guests were the following:—The Mistress of Girton College and the Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge, the Principal of Somerville College, Oxford, the Principal of Bedford College, London, and the heads of many other women's colleges; H.M. Principal Lady Inspector of Factories (Miss A. M. Anderson, M.A.), the Lady Superintendent of the Post Office Savings Bank (Miss Maria Constance Smith, I.S.O.), Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. W. K. Clifford, Lady Strachey, Mrs. Alec Tweedie, Mrs. Sophie Bryant, D.SC., Mrs. Hertha Ayrton, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Mrs. Wilfrid Meynell, Miss Emily Davies, LL.D., etc. Truly an imposing list of names, a standing testimony to the value of woman's brain power in the work of the humanities and sciences."

Twelve hundred contributors from all over the world. Among whom only twenty-seven were women. Is it surprising that I was proud to be numbered among those lucky few, and to have been one of the four asked to speak at that great gathering?

The Morning Post, after giving the names of the guests present, added that the wide range of feminine activity, shown in the lives and work of those ladies present, proved that into the last four decades women had compressed the work of four centuries. That the interests, work, and present place in the social scheme of women were entirely on a level with that of men, this being the strongest testimony of the enormous advance in civilisation made by all the English-speaking peoples in the past forty years.

Hurrah! All honour to women! Admiring my sex as I do, here let me make my boast of them, and give a little list of the leading women contributors that was kindly furnished me by Miss Janet Hogarth[8] (head of the female staff of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*).

If some are omitted, I am sorry; for we should make the most of our few chances of letting the blind, deaf outer world see and hear what women are doing and have lately done.

Education.—Mrs. Henry Sidgwick.
Scholarship.—Mrs. Wilde (Miss A. M. Clay), Mrs. Alison Phillips, Miss B. Philpotts.
Science.—Lady Huggins, Miss A. L. Smith, the late Miss Agnes Clarke, and the late Miss Mary Bateson.
Travel.—Lady Lugard, Mrs. Alec Tweedie, Miss Gertrude Bell.
Sociology.—Miss A. Anderson.
Literature.—Mrs. Meynell, Miss Jessie Weston, Miss Margaret Bryant, Miss A. Zimmern.
Church History.—Miss A. Panes, Mrs. O'Neill.
Music.—Miss Schlesinger.
Medicine.—Mrs. Hennessy and the late Miss Fisher.
Philosophy.—Lady Welby.

Having myself, as usual, refused to speak, I was kindly reproached by Mr. Chisholm for declining, and told "to be sure to be amusing."

But stop a moment! *Punch* was so delightful in his next issue, that it is to be hoped Toby will not yap at me for lifting the morsel wholesale.

"THE END OF WOMAN

"[Miss Fluffy Frou-Frou's reply to Miss Janet Hogarth, who, at a recent Encyclopædia-Contributors' Dinner, said the best answer she had ever heard to the question, 'What are women put into this world for?' was, 'To keep the men's heads straight.']

"WHEN you would settle woman's place and aim
And duties on this planet,
I, and whole *heaps* of girls who think the same,
Bid you shut up, Miss JANET!

"Speak for the Few, if speak you must, but *pray*
Don't speak for *us*, the Many;
We simply *scream* with mirth at what you say;
We are not taking any.

"Your words, dear JANET, frankly are *si bête*
That all we others spurn them;
We (Heavens!) *we*, 'to keep the men's heads straight!'
We who just live to *turn them*!!"

It seems that in the first edition of the *Encyclopædia*, published in 1798, the editor defined woman as "the female of man. See *Homo*." Finally, Miss Hogarth, who began by telling what women had done for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ended by saying what it had given them, viz. the opportunity, hitherto unequalled, of showing what they could do to help learning, the chance to demonstrate their rightful place in the learned world.

Afterwards Mrs. Fawcett, in an excellent speech, said that the wife of a working-man (if she did her duty) was the hardest-worked creature on the face of the globe. Pointing to the successes achieved by women in various directions, she recalled the remark of a famous Cambridge coach who reproached his idle students, asking how they would like to be beaten by a woman. One replied, "I should much prefer it, sir, to being beaten by a man."

To end up the notices of this memorable dinner, ever-delightful *Punch* helps one to leave off with a smile. This is a little scrap stolen —be quiet, Toby!—from a column of quips and cranks honouring our gathering:

"PERPETUAL EMOTION.
"(*From 'The Times' of December 20, 1906.*)

"The series of spritely dinners given by the proprietors of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to the contributors to the eleventh edition is still in full swing, the two hundred and fiftieth being held last night. Sir Hugh Chisholm took the Chair as usual, habit having become second nature with him; and he made, for a nonagenarian, a singularly lucid speech, in which he once again explained the genesis of the Encyclopædic idea and its progress through the ages until it reached perfection under his own fostering care. Sir Hugh, who spoke only for two hours instead of his customary three, was at times but imperfectly heard by the Press, but a formidable array of ear-trumpets absorbed his earlier words at the table.

"Sir Thomas Beecham, Mus.Doc., responding for the toast of the musical contributors, indulged in some interesting reminiscences of his early career. In those days, as he reminded his hearers, he was a paulo-post-Straussian. But it proved only a case of *sauter pour mieux reculer*, and now he confessed that he found it impossible to listen with any satisfaction to music later than that of Mendelssohn. After all, melody, simple and unsophisticated, was the basic factor in music, and an abiding fame could never be built up on the calculated pursuit of eccentricity.

"Lord Gosse, who entered and dined in a wheeled chair, remarked incidentally that he had missed only seven out of the two hundred and fifty dinners, and then told some diverting if not too novel anecdotes of his official connection with the Board of Trade and recited a charming sonnet which he had composed in honour of the Editor, the two last lines running as follows:

> Foe of excess, of anarchy and schism,
> I lift my brimming glass to thee, Hugh Chisholm.

"Few centenarians can ever have contributed a more exhilarating addition to an evening's excitement.

"Dr. Hooper, late Master of Trinity and ex-Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, expressed his gratification that his *alma*

mater was indissolubly associated with the great undertaking which they were once more met to celebrate in convivial conclave. Cambridge was famous for its 'Backs,' and it had put its back into the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He hoped that he might be spared to attend their three hundredth meeting, with Sir HUGH CHISHOLM as Autocrat of the Dinner-Table."

CHAPTER XXV

ON JOTTINGS

DO you ever jot? If not, pray allow me to introduce you to one of the least expensive and most repaying domestic hobbies. I am myself a most inveterate jotter, both by pen and brush, for I have cases full of water-colour sketches, and bundles of maps, scraps, photos, and oddments. Plenty of entertainment for future years can be laid up in this way. Good stories; real plots too strange for fiction; bon-mots; impressions of scenery; plays; programmes; events; menus; anything that pleases one's fancy is fish for the jotting net.

In some receptacle—whether drawer, despatch-box, or tin case—fling in your jottings, pencilled in haste while fresh. I have cupboards of notes on Mexico, Iceland, Finland, Lapland, Sicily, Russia, Italy, Morocco, America, Canada—pamphlets, prints, statistics, and other heterogeneous matter.

And to all would-be journalists and aspiring book-writers let me also add: jot down your happy thoughts, smaller inspirations, appreciated quotations, for all may be useful some day.

To begin with, here is a "true fact"—as silly persons will sometimes declare—concerning a banker.

By way of title to my little tale, I will call it:

"THE MILLIONAIRE'S FOUR POUNDS."

He was lunching with me on his return from Egypt, this quiet, unassuming head of a great banking firm.

"What have you written this year?" I asked.

"Twenty-two stanzas on Egypt, a land of ancient tombs and modern worries. They appeared, and I actually got four pounds for them."

The four pounds delighted him. That he spent more than four thousand pounds in Egypt counted for naught, he had *earned* four

pounds.

"Rather funny, I was motoring in Scotland lately, and I called on the Editor," continued my guest. "He was charming. We talked on many subjects, and then I said, 'You don't pay your contributors very highly, do you?'

"'Yes, oh yes, we do.'

"'You only paid me four pounds for twenty-two stanzas the other day.'

"'Ah, well, you see, that was poetry, and no one reads poetry!'"

He told me the joke with a merry little chuckle on his grave face, and his blue eyes twinkled.

This story is equalised by one Herbert Hampton told me. He was at Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire, and wanted a couple of rooms for a week to rest and do a little sketching; so seeing "Apartments" up at a tiny cottage, he went in. It was a very simple place, clean and tidy, but quite a workman's home.

The woman asked him two guineas a week. Considering the accommodation offered, he thought the price ridiculous.

"Come, come, I am not a millionaire," he said.

She looked at him, paused, and replied:

"I thought you were a *gentleman*."

Sometimes one has utterly unexpected annoyances. Here is an instance of such in my own experience. One day quite lately I was rung up on the telephone, and in the most rude and insulting terms was upbraided for having knocked off a woman's hat in Regent Street. As I had not been in Regent Street that day, and never knocked off a woman's hat in my life, I was naturally annoyed. The telephone rang again and again with the same impertinent remarks.

This was only the beginning of much trouble. Then came letters, blackmail, I suppose one might call them, and constant telephonic communications and general annoyance.

In fact, it became so bad that, after nearly six months, I had to apply to a private detective. He took the matter in hand, and some time later—for though there were addresses, most of them proved to be bogus ones—he succeeded in unearthing the culprit, and the trouble ceased. That was one of the minor annoyances of life.

Now for one of the minor pleasures; just to balance the worries.

Some years ago I employed a gasfitter. The man interested me strangely. He spoke like a gentleman. He had the most beautifully refined hands, he was artistic in everything he did, and while attending to gas-fires, kept excusing himself for making appreciative remarks on good bits of furniture, or beautiful shades of colour.

One day he brought me a very old bit of china. It was a little cream jug, good in form, colour, and design. He hoped that I would accept it, as I seemed to appreciate pretty things. This was a little embarrassing, and became more so when his eyes filled with tears and he told me it had belonged to his mother.

"Yes, madam, to my mother. I was not born in the circumstances in which you see me," and then he owned that he was the son of a peer.

Beyond that he would not reveal his identity, though he acknowledged that drink was the primary cause that brought him down to where he was.

Poor man. He was afterwards taken very ill, and I was able to do a little for him, but he died. And so was buried a strange romance, for the man was by birth a gentleman, in taste an artist, and in speech a poet; and yet circumstances and weakness of character had brought him to this low estate.

One instance of the strange stories concerning secret skeletons, locked up in our neighbours' hearts, naturally leads to another.

I once met a man at dinner at a friend's house. He offered to drive me home. He asked to call. After two or three chats he told me his story—one of those heart-rending stories we hear sometimes. He had married young and repented.

There was no real ground for divorce; besides, he shunned the publicity of it in connection with an honoured name. Our country—alas!—won't give people divorces for incompatibility. The usual result followed.

Well—he thought his wealth, his name, his achievements would live down, or, rather, drag up, the "woman of his choice." Did they?

No. Of course not. He thought also that this time he had found an idol, a sympathiser, an inspiration. All went well for a time. Then the chains became irksome. *She* chafed at her position. She had everything but that marriage ring which spells respectability. She became discontented, irritable, the love grew less, the desire to be made "an honest woman" grew more and more. He dare not face the world a second time and own he had misjudged woman's character. Therefore their dog-and-cat life continued—because they hadn't the pluck to break it.

It was a tale of woe. Broken in health and in spirit, he owned he had defied the world and yet—with all the odds of position and wealth in his favour—had failed.

One day he suddenly wrote: "I can't come and see you again, you belong to the world I have left, or that has left me. It only stirs up the misery of my present life. I thank you for your help, your sympathy, your much-prized friendship, but it is not fair on you to let you worry over me, and being with you is making me more discontented than ever. And so good-bye."

As he stepped suddenly across my path, he stepped as suddenly back into the shadow. Poor man. His is the tale of many, but that does not make it any the less sad.

I lived in the world he had turned his back on—the world which finally shut him out, and that proud heart, that big brain and scholarly man literally laid down his arms, weary of heart, sick of soul, ambition sapped—life gone. He merely dragged out his existence from day to day. Chained to a loathsome sore. He did not complain. How could he? The chain was of his own making, the sore its inevitable result. Why, we ask, did he submit? Why? Because habit had become stronger than will.

Success is made or marred by individuality.

Hostesses sometimes find themselves in very awkward positions.

A man once came up the stairs and shook hands with his hostess, who cheerfully said:

"And where is your wife?"

There was a great crowd at the time, and the man, somewhat briefly, replied:

"I have lost her."

"I hope you will soon find her," said the lady; "but it is rather difficult among so many people," she added, with a merry laugh.

He looked crestfallen, and, as if not knowing exactly what to say, bent forward and murmured into the ear of his smiling hostess:

"My wife is *dead*."

Collapse of the lady.

On Christmas cards.

Some folk affect to dislike or despise Christmas cards, but I find them most useful, often most welcome, always a kindly remembrance.

People in strange lands have been good to me. They have taken me about, invited me to their houses, have helped me in my work, and many introductions, obtained originally for practical purposes, have ended in real friendships.

It is impossible to keep up a correspondence with all one's friends, however, and yet one likes them to know they are not forgotten.

Hence the idea of my Christmas cards originated. For many years now I have sent these cards of greeting to the furthermost corner of the earth, and thanks to the talent of my friends, or the practical use of my own camera, they have been somewhat original.

Here is a delightful card Harry Furniss designed for me among my earlier ones. I had just written *Behind the Footlights*, hence the lady with comedy and tragedy on her cap, pulling aside the curtain to reveal sketches of the different books. Needless to say, this clever idea was his own.

Hustled History, one of that series of clever little booklets that have appeared annually for some time, was the talk of the town when it came out in the spring of 1908. My publisher rang me up the next morning to *congratulate me on* the *advertisement* of myself that it contained. Rather a curious way of putting it, I thought.

Everyone read it, everyone talked about it. It had dabs at everyone, but only three women were included—Mrs. Humphry Ward, Marie Corelli, and myself. This latter take-off on my style appeared under the title of:

In Romantic Rouen

By Mrs. Alec Tweedie

The same sort of quip had appeared about me a year or two before in *Wisdom While You Wait*, but I cannot lay my hands on it.

Colonel Selfe, R.A., who wrote so many of the acrostics for *The World*, one day sent me the following double acrostic on myself:

Where now will this lady go
Greece, Japan, Fernando Po,
Honolulu, Mexico?
Whatsoe'er her goal, we look
For another charming book
Telling of the route she took.
Ere she starts for foreign climes
With this wish we send these rhymes
Bon voyage and pleasant times.

1. Though Kalja the Finnish taste may suit,
   For this it seems a sorry substitute.
2. Those Finns who read their books most, dread the least
   This long-named catechising by the priest.
3. In Tellemachen, so her pages tell
   One coachman spoke this, though not very well.
4. Remember Nyslott, also where
   The English ladies lodged while there.
5. This we gather, for "to the"
   Norse equivalent to be.
6. In Finland the cow of this is the source,
   Which is comparative only, of course.
7. Weird poems of a bygone time
   Written on parchment black with grime.
8. We here must Fridtjof Nansen name
   As this for ever known to fame.
9. His hand it was that, rising from the wave,
   Dragged Lopt the sinner to a wat'ry grave.
10. With a terrific bang and mighty crash,
    Full into this they felt the steamer smash.
11. To study this Iceland is not the place,
    No butterflies, few insects there you trace.

				CHAP.
1.	Al	E.	Through Finland in Carts	2
2.	Lukukinkeri	T.	" " "	16
3.	Englis	H.	A Winter's Jaunt in Norway	8
4.	Castl	E.	Through Finland in Carts	11
5.	Ti	L.	A Winter's Jaunt in Norway	49
6.	Wealt	H.	Through Finland in Carts	16
7.	Edd	A.	A Girl's Ride through Iceland	13
8.	Explore	R.	A Winter Jaunt in Norway	12
9.	Devi	L.	A Girl's Ride in Iceland	6
10.	Ice flo	E.	A Winter's Jaunt in Norway	1
11.	Entomolog	Y.	A Girl's Ride Through Iceland	4

This is another, composed by the late Major Martin Hume, the historian:

E astward bound to the Cuban coast
T hree tiny galleots ran
H omeward bearing a beaten host
E scaped from Yucatan.

L eft behind in the sleep of death
A gallant half remain
L ured to doom, but with dying breath
E xalting Christ and Spain.

C oarse and poor were the trophies gained,
T rinkets of tarnished dross,
W oe! for the land with blood they stained
E nslaved to greed and cross

E ndowed with grace, from old New Spain
D o *you* rich trophies bring
I n gentle words that friendship gain
E ntail no pain or sting.

Most of us have known or heard of such a lesser tragedy as the following, and thanked our stars it had not happened to one of our own kin.

"What are you crying for?" asked the manageress of an hotel.

The girl she addressed was a fragile, pretty creature of nineteen or twenty, looking more as if a puff of wind would blow her away than as if she was capable of doing the dirty work of a kitchenmaid.

"Oh, nothing, thank you," replied the tearful voice. "I hurt my finger, but it will be all right in a moment."

The manageress eyed her critically. The polite reply, the refined speech and tone of voice, were all so unlike anything she was accustomed to in the kitchen department that they struck her as strange.

Then she noticed that, while the girl's cotton sleeves were tucked up above her elbow, her arms were round, white, and plump, the hands small and pretty. Turning to the *chef* standing behind her, she remarked:

"Your kitchenmaid looks hardly up to her work, *chef*."

"Oh, she is all right," he replied. "She has not been in a situation just lately and she is a bit soft."

The reply was satisfactory, and, being a busy woman, the manageress went on with her orders.

Next morning she was again strongly attracted by her new little kitchenmaid, who was busy in the scullery washing dishes. The girl was so ladylike in appearance, so delightful in manner, so charming in voice, her superior felt that there was something unusual, even wrong, about the matter; so she searched for the original letter from the *chef* to see under what conditions the underling had been engaged. It said that, as he preferred to work with his own kitchenmaid, he wished to bring her with him, more especially as she was now his wife.

Some days went on, and the little maid looked paler each morning, sadder and more depressed. At last a tap came at the manageress's door, and the girl, in her cotton frock, white apron, neat hair and dainty cap, was standing on the threshold.

"May I come in, madam?" asked the plaintive voice.

"Yes, certainly; come along. Are you not well?"

"Oh yes, I am quite well, but I want to know if you will do me a favour. I have got a cheque for ten pounds from a lady whose service I used to be in, and I want to know if you will change it for me without letting my husband know."

The manageress looked up, surprised.

"Yes, I can change it; but how does this lady come to be sending you such a big cheque?" (As she took it in her hand she saw a well-known name upon it.)

The girl made some excuse and told a long and rambling story, but blushed to the roots of her hair when given the money.

Imploringly she said, "You will never tell *him*, will you?"

"No," replied the kindly woman; "mind you keep the money safe. You may want it some day."

Some hours went by. The manageress was pondering over the girl and her reticence, over the cheque and its mystery, when a servant rushed in asking her to come to the kitchen at once, as something dreadful had happened. She flew. There on the floor, with blood

streaming from her head, lay the little kitchenmaid. Near her, sullen, stern, and menacing, stood the *chef*. At once the manageress ordered that the girl should be carried to her room and forbade the husband to enter. Then she sent for him to the office and asked for an explanation. But he gave none, except that his subordinate had cheeked him, so he hit her rather harder than he meant to do and stunned her. A blow against the oven door had caused the bleeding. Such was his story. Very different was that of the girl.

As she recovered consciousness, she moaned, "Save me!" and as her senses became more acute, she begged, "Don't let him come near me."

"Are you afraid of him?" asked her protectress.

"Yes, madam, mortally afraid; he will kill me. Do not let him come near me," she implored in agony of mind.

"What happened?" persisted the manageress.

"Somehow he found out I had that cheque and wanted me to give it to him, but I would not and came to you. For it was all I had in the world, and I wanted it to get away and leave him."

"To leave him? But you have only been married a month."

"It seems like a hundred years of hell," moaned the unhappy little bride. "He has been so cruel to me." And then she told her story.

"I am not really a kitchenmaid. I am Lady Mary ——, but I liked cooking, and mother wanted me to learn, so I used to go into the kitchen in the morning and play about. The *chef* was charming to me, and—well, I think I must have been mad—I thought I had fallen in love with him, and I ran away and married him a month ago. From the first moment he has been bullying my family for money. He made me come away with him as his kitchenmaid until he got enough money out of my family to start a home of our own. But please do not let him come near me again. He will kill me! That cheque was from my aunt, for I had to tell her of my misery and disgrace. It was sent to enable me to get away and go to her home, where I should be safe."

"Do not worry any more about that," said her protectress determinedly. "You shall come to my room now, and I will telegraph to your aunt and put things right."

She did so, and the girl was restored to her family. Strange as the story may sound, it is a true bill.

While on the subject of servants, the following is an interesting sidelight.

A mistress offered a servant girl a seat for a theatre. The girl beamed with delight. Suddenly her face shadowed, and she asked:

"Are there any countesses in it, ma'am?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"Because I don't think mother would like me to go and see a play with a countess in it, ma'am."

"And why not?"

"Oh, because they are all so dreadfully wicked."

"Who says so?" asked the lady, amazed.

"The books, ma'am."

"What books?"

"The penny books and Sunday papers."

When looking back on my delightful American trips and to my real good time there, one little crumpled rose-leaf returns to memory, which, at the time, was a minor annoyance, but since has often caused me to smile at its absurdity.

Many and weird, truly, are the experiences and home truths one is vouchsafed while travelling.

The last time I went to the States I intended to pay some visits, and as I was very overworked and tired I was persuaded to take a maid to look after me. That maid cost me a small fortune in money, as well as proving a constant anxiety, inasmuch as *I had to look after her* continually. A child of five years could not have been more trouble.

Almost before we left the landing-stage of the Mersey she told me she felt ill. The water at the time was perfectly calm; we were, in fact, still in the river, but the wretched woman went to bed before we crossed the bar and did not appear again until we reached New

York; therefore I had the pleasure of paying her first-class fare and the extra steward's tips for waiting on her—instead of her being a comfort to me.

Arrived on Yankee soil, I received a telegram from the President of Mexico suggesting my revisiting his country. I told the good lady I was going to Mexico.

"Law! M'm."

"It is six days and nights in the train."

"Law! M'm."

By this time her eyes opened wider than ever. She still remembered the six days and nights on the steamer. Alas and alack! she was even more ill on the train than she had been on the boat. At Washington we had rooms on the seventh floor; but that woman refused to go up or down in the lift because it made her feel "so queer," so she walked—and grumbled.

Oh, the joys of travelling with a servant!

When we started from New York I took off my rings and watchchain, and, as usual on such expeditions, packed them away.

The maid was sitting opposite to me in the train when she discovered they were missing. Suddenly she exclaimed:

"Oh, what have you done with your rings?" knowing they were the only articles of jewellery I always wore.

"I put them away," I replied. "I never travel off the beaten track wearing jewellery of any kind."

"Oh dear, what a pity! They make you look such a lady."

(Collapse of poor Mrs. A. T. Did "ladyism" depend on diamond rings?)

CHAPTER XXVI

MORE JOTTINGS: AND HYDE PARK

GENEVIÈVE WARD'S stories are endless and amusing. To mention only two of these.

"A man arrived to have a tooth out.

"'Will it hurt much, sir?'

"'Rather.'

"'Real hurt?'

"'Rather.'

"'Well, I don't think,' began the man in a dither....

"'Sit down, sir, sit down right there, and bear it like a woman!'"

Story number two.

"Another man asked the dentist his charge.

"'Fifty cents.'

"'Fifty cents, eh?'

"'Yes.'

"'But with gas?'

"'Guess that's fifty cents more.'

"'Wa'al, I won't have gas then.'

"'You're a brave man!'

"''Tisn't for me, it's for my wife!'"

Now a couple of child stories. Surely, the workings of a child's mind are too strange to be imagined.

My little nephew, aged four, was saying his prayers, kneeling on his bed and resting against his nurse. Suddenly he stopped.

Nurse: "Go on, dear."

Small Boy: "I can't."

Nurse: "Go on, dear."

Small Boy: "I am switched off, Dod's talking to someone else."

Naturally, nurse's breath was somewhat taken away, and she did not know what to answer, when suddenly reassurance came from the small boy. "It is all right. We are connected again now," and he began again.

Here is another story about the same little man, though he was then rather younger, to be exact.

He was sent, one hot summer's day, with his baby sister and two nurses, to Kensington Gardens as a treat. When he came back his mother asked him if he had enjoyed it.

"Oh yes," he replied. "And what did you do?" she asked, but instead of replying in his usual bubbling fashion, he opened his eyes wide, and looking at her, exclaimed:

"Do you know?"

"Know what?"

"Do you know?"

"Well, what?"

"Do you know?" he again repeated, his eyes nearly dropping out of his head by this time, "we saw a lady smoking!"

Not being exactly sure what to reply to this remark, the fond mother went on with her work.

Seeing her unresponsive, the young gentleman trotted into the next room where his father was smoking.

"Dad, do you know?"

"Yes, I know, you went to tea in Kensington Gardens."

"But DO YOU KNOW?" repeated the small boy, more earnestly than ever; and then standing before his father with his hands behind his back, he solemnly announced:

"WE SAW A LADY SMOKING!"

The father, like the mother, was a little nonplussed, and merely exclaimed:

"Oh, really!" But the small boy stood firm to his ground, and with eyes still wider than before, exclaimed:

"Dad, do you think *she was learning to be a gentleman*?"

Occasionally my eyes light upon some jotting worthy of almost pigeon-hole dignity—too prized for the society of mere scraps, yet

too small for the space of a chapter. Here is one concerning a famous lawyer.

Fate has often thrown me into the company of lawyers—the most excellent of people when you don't meet them in a professional, or fee-paying sense. The really busy advocate is in most cases a delightful man, for the very qualities which make him a social favourite go no little way to establish his success at the Bar.

I once asked Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., what was his recipe for producing a good barrister, and was a little surprised at the importance he attached to the study of oratory.

"Every law student at the beginning of his work should study the art of speaking, the most valuable and the most highly rewarded of all the arts which can be acquired by man.

"The counsel needs the power of fluent and correct expression and of the rhetorical arrangement of his argument of speech. He should have an easy, clear, and well-modulated elocution which compels attention, makes it pleasant to listen to him, and so predisposes in his favour the judgment of his hearers."

"Ah, but has everyone this gift?" I said.

"Perhaps not, but all these things must be acquired. Each one of them requires a special study. Some men are, no doubt, more highly gifted by nature than others in strength of intellect, tenacity of memory, and the graces of oratory, but no one was ever so highly gifted as to be able to dispense with the labour by which the natural powers are trained and strengthened. The best books for the young law student are *Whately's Logic* and *Whately's Rhetoric*. They should be read and re-read until he knows them from cover to cover."

"You are a very warm advocate of speech," I interposed. "Do you think it a lost art, or an improving one?"

"The ancients were the best teachers. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (the best of all), Cicero's *De Oratore*, Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory*, are the books of study; Blair and Campbell should be read, but are of no great merit, while of Whately I have already spoken. But the study of good models—and when I speak of study I do not mean simply reading a speech, but the examination and analysis of it, applying the rules of the art which these treatises contain: the attentive

hearing of great speeches in Parliament or the courts, or of great sermons, is the only way by which the capacity for really good speaking can be acquired.

"Then every man who wishes to speak well should study elocution as an art. He should practise singing to give variety of tone to the voice. He should habitually see and study the best actors of his time, and so learn the ease and yet the moderation of gesture which helps so much even the best-constructed and most clearly delivered speech. If any one of these studies and exercises is neglected, the man who fails at the Bar must put some part of the blame upon himself."

Sir Edward Clarke has fulfilled his own theories, even to witnessing the drama. He is a well-known first-nighter, and is often to be seen in the stalls of a theatre.

He sat in Parliament and listened to great speeches. He has himself built a church at Staines, wherein he has heard many sermons. And he has climbed to the very top of his profession.

It would be doing him an injustice to suggest that he places speech as the first and most essential quality in the lawyer's training. The most brilliant speaker must have something to say. A capacity for logical and scientific reasoning and knowledge of the principles and rules of the law come before all.

"All success in every calling comes from hard work; there is no better secret," he said decisively.

For years Sir Edward Clarke journeyed up to town from his charming home at Staines every morning, during the legal terms. His companion in the nine o'clock train was invariably the famous Orientalist and brilliant scholar, Dr. Ginsburg, who had made a home for himself and his unique collection of Bibles, and marvellous assortment of prints and etchings, at Virginia Water. Many and interesting were the conversations which these two celebrated men enjoyed during their little railway journey together. The one went off to the British Museum to work among the dead languages, and the completion of his life-work, the *Massorah*, and the other to the Law Courts, where, in wig and gown, he soon appeared from out his

private room in the building, to the consolation of his own clients and the anxiety of his opponents.

Sir Edward Clarke declares the best speech he ever made in his life was addressed to one person—namely, the late Mr. Justice Kekewich. There was no jury, and the judge was alone on the bench. It was the case of Allcard and Skinner, a question of the plaintiff being allowed to recover from an Anglican sisterhood the money she gave while herself a member of it. Sir Edward managed to keep the money for the sisterhood, and Lord Russell of Killowen always declared it was his friend's greatest stroke of oratory.

One of the events of the year at Leeds is the Lifeboat Celebration, when some thousands of pounds are collected. In these days when women are to the fore, the Committee decided to ask a woman to take the chair, and I was chosen for that position. They have the biggest of halls, which holds five thousand persons, with Members of Parliament, Lord Mayors, and other dignitaries on the platform.

The London editor of the *Yorkshire Post* came personally to ask me. I refused, funking the speech. Two days later, the Yorkshire Editor-in-chief arrived, flattered me to the skies, and begged me to go. But I persisted in excusing myself, and suggested his asking Sir Ernest Shackleton, promising that if they could not get him, I would do it.

Thank Heaven! Shackleton accepted, in spite of all his engagements, consequent on having just returned from the South Pole.

What an escape, but still it was a great compliment.

Here is a jotting that was pencilled down warm from the heart. As it stands, I give it, with its date, May 14th, 1909:

I do not know when I have been so pleased as at a little episode which happened yesterday.

It chanced a couple of years ago that I was able to help, encourage, and sympathise with a young man at a very trying time,

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